1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

Chapter 6 The Political Rank Path

668 In the 1930's, political events external to Santal society began
114 to alter profoundly the path that the Santal were treading. What one observes today instead of acculturation and assimilation is a native sociocultural resurgence, but one filled with
[123] apparently paradoxical elements. Though I was unaware of it at the time, the first Santal I met in Jamshedpur confronted me in the course of a few weeks with all of the fundamental questions which this resurgence poses. To introduce these questions I will recount this experience, and with the benefit of hindsight, suggest the directions which answers to the questions posed will take.

It was October of 1957 when I arrived at Jamshedpur, and the city was preparing for Durga Puja, the most elaborately
• 115 celebrated Hindu festival in Jamshedpur. Company officials had thoughtfully provided me with my first Santal informant, clearly a good model of Company efforts in behalf of tribals. Mr. F. came to Jamshedpur with a high-school education and received further training in the TISCO apprentice school. He had served for fifteen years in the brick kiln works and was

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

• 115 then in line for promotion to assistant supervisor. His work record was excellent, including an award of Rs. 25 and special commendation for having suggested an improvement in the brick-making process. Fortunately for me, Mr. F. spoke adequate English in addition to excellent Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, and three Mundari languages—his own (Santal), Ho, and Mundari.

I was impressed with his intelligence and noticed that he seemed highly acculturated, though at that early stage of our relationship I could not point to specific Hindu practices which marked this acculturation; it was rather an impression based upon bearing and gesture. Later my impression of Mr. F.'s Hinduization was repeatedly confirmed. I learned that he had been sent to live with a Brahmin family as a small boy. I recall a discussion among Mr. F., five other Santal, and me in which the rites of Santal local lineages were discussed; Mr. F. alone insisted that the rites of some lineages, especially his own, were purer and higher than those of other lineages. The other Santal present argued in traditional Santal fashion that each thinks his own lineage best but that none is better than any other. The strongest confirmation of my impression is that it is shared by less acculturated Santal. One young man who had married a relative of Mr. F. refused to visit Mr. F., despite the urging of his wife, who had lived for some years in Mr. F.'s house and wished to visit. It was this young man who remarked that Mr. F. was so much like a *diku*, that "before him I feel like a black Santal."

668 But it was not Mr. F.'s acculturation which puzzled me. The 796 literature on acculturation of Indian tribals is replete with such 115 cases and we are not without some knowledge of the basis of this acculturation. It was rather the vehemence of his objection to Santal attendance and participation in the Durga Puja cere-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 796 • 115 monies which I could not account for. He told me that the celebration was a "lure and a trap for tribals." When I asked him if other Santal felt similarly he described the manner in which word against attendance and participation was being spread throughout the area by Santal and other tribal headmen and men of influence. Surprisingly, he and his family attended the ceremonies and so did a number of other Santal from the city and surrounding countryside, including workers from the *bustees*. The word, however, had been circulated among tribals that they should not attend and should under no conditions participate by performing group dances or becoming possessed, as was their custom. Some did refrain from attendance as urged, and no tribals performed group dances or became possessed.

Why should Mr. F., one of the most acculturated Santal, vehemently oppose tribal attendance and participation in the Hindu celebration? It seemed to me that the most acculturated would surely be most in favor of acculturation. I asked Mr. F. why he opposed attendance and participation. He said, "It is bad for Santal and other tribals to be present because they are mostly 'ignorant' people and on such occasions are taken advantage of by numerous Hindus who wheedle away their earnings." While this explanation justified his own attendance since he is not "ignorant," taken at face value it hardly seems to account for the organized opposition to tribal attendance and the particular emphasis against participation in the ceremonies. In addition Mr. F.'s fears that his fellow tribals would be gulled by the Hindus seemed inappropriate, since most of the tribals of the area who might attend were either workers in daily contact with Hindus or farmers who live near Jamshedpur, or villagers who run the risk of being swindled

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 weekly at various markets. Santal attendance at Durga Puja
796 could hardly present Hindus with unprecedented opportunities
• 115 to take advantage of tribals. Nevertheless, as I shall show later, a less literal interpretation of Mr. F.'s remarks accounts rather well, at least in part, for his opposition.

668 An event a few days after the Durga Puja provides some
115 clues about Mr. F.'s opposition. He came to see me and to return a book on the Santal which he had borrowed. I asked what he thought of the book and he said, "It is very bad; it says that 'aboriginals' (*ādibāsī*; Hindi) only progress when in the presence of Hindus. For example, it says that we have borrowed 'vermilion' from the Hindus when we think it is they who have borrowed it from us." I asked him to show me those portions of the book to which he took exception, and he pointed to the section dealing with acculturation. He was somewhat mistaken in attributing to the author an attitude favoring acculturation; both his limited command of English and his knowledge of the predominant Hindu position regarding acculturation probably influenced his interpretation. Mr. F. was not willing to let the matter rest with the mere comment that the book was bad, and he caused me some alarm by proposing to read the portions of the book he opposed before the local branch of the tribal Jharkhand political party. His objective was to obtain a declaration of protest against the book to be forwarded to the Central Government. It is not now important that I managed to dissuade him from such action. But that a sophisticated Santal could contemplate such action suggests institutionalized opposition to acculturation. It further suggests a connection between this opposition and political objectives. It was only later that I learned that the Jharkhand party had spearheaded the drive to prevent tribal attendance and partici-

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

668 pation at the Durga Puja festival. One acculturated Santal
• 115 opposing acculturation is a mystery which the anthropologist, with his concern for custom, might choose to ignore; but I met such acculturated Santal everywhere, and they proved the most militant opponents of acculturation; indeed, the least militant proved to be the least acculturated and most isolated villagers. The ordinary Santal, a little behind the times, were just getting on to emulation while the elite maneuvered a volte-face. Events of the 1930's explain this change.

175 With the approach of independence in the 1930's a new
668 political rank path opened. The British Raj was gradually relinquishing power, and it became evident to sophisticated observers that the days of the princely rulers of Mayurbhanj, Seraikela, and Kharswan were numbered. The day of democratic election was dawning in India. In the north, with headquarters in Ranchi, the Oxford-educated and Christian Munda, Jai Pal Singh, organized an "aboriginal" political party. The proclaimed aim of the party was and is to establish a tribally dominated state within the Indian Union. Such a state would include the geographical area known as the Chotanagpur Plateau and roughly referred to in Indian literature as the Jharkhand. It would include much of southern Bihar, northern Orissa and a thin slice of the western portion of West Bengal. In such a state, which incidentally would contain Jamshedpur and some of the richest mineral deposits in India, tribal peoples would be in a near majority.

The "likenesses" shared by the Mundari-speaking peoples who comprise most of the tribal population of the Jharkhand were available as cultural cement. In the north, Jai Pal successfully brought together the Mundari-speaking Munda and Santal as well as the Dravidian-speaking Oraon, who had long lived

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

184 all agree that the recent proposal for simultaneity is one that
668 ought to be implemented.

796 Mr. F., the acculturated city Santal raised by a Brahman family, was essentially opposed to attendance at the Durga Puja
668 festival in Jamshedpur because of its danger to solidarity. His
796 own acculturation and assimilationist tendencies were acquired
• [115] before the opening of the political rank path. Today, despite some anxiety regarding the practice of certain distinctive practices, he is among the leaders of the movement for social solidarity and cultural separatism. No wonder that he should have complained, even though in error, about the passage in the Santal ethnography which seemed to him to say that "Santal only improve when in contact with Hindus."

668 The new solidarity fostered by political democracy is a new solidarity and not simply a return to traditional solidarity, at least for the immigrant industrial workers. It is they who are in the forefront of the movement, and there is no doubt that they are now bound to their people much more tightly than heretofore. But this does not make a *bustee* into a native village; it does not make marriage into a bond between kinship groups and villages; it does not eliminate the separate income and individual mobility of factory employment. In short, it does not recreate the traditional social basis for traditional solidarity. Instead it creates a new direct bond with all the Santal and to a somewhat lesser degree with all other tribals of the area. This new bond rests ultimately on the somewhat tenuous opportunity for the Santal and other tribals to function as a successful interest group. Given enough time, perhaps the new "likenesses" will be of enough force to hold the Santal and other tribals together in spite of change in the avenues of mobility.

[P. 120 is blank]

Zt Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

[p.vii]

EDITOR'S PREFACE

It having proved impossible to get this translation published before the author's death the manuscript was left in the care of Professor O. Solberg, who had repeatedly rendered invaluable assistance in bringing out other important works of his and who has since then published his SANTAL RIDDLES and his WITCHCRAFT AMONG THE SANTALS, Oslo 1940. At his request I have undertaken to act as editor of the translation, and I am happy to be able to do this last service to a deceased friend. 128

I have considered it to be my duty to check the translation with the original Santal text wherever I was in doubt, but I have only occasionally found it necessary to make some slight and insignificant verbal changes. On the whole I have faithfully reproduced the readings of the manuscript.

I have felt more free with regard to the numerous and sometimes rather long notes which had been added and which were sometimes apt to divert the reader's attention from the text itself. Since the translation was drafted some important works of our author have been published, and his SANTAL DICTIONARY, Oslo 1932—1936, is in reality a comprehensive encyclopaedia of Santal lore. A reference to its statements usually gives full information about such details which would else have to be explained in lengthy notes. I have therefore to a considerable extent substituted such references for the notes of the manuscript.

The text here laid before the ethnologist is a genuine account of Santal traditions and institutions, taken down from the mouth of Kolean, an old Santal, who had learnt it from his own teacher. We cannot say how far back these traditional tales can be carried, from generation to generation. But as we have them before us, they are evidently the result of a comparatively long development. 115 •

We know nothing about the different phases of this development. It is evident that there are borrowings from Aryan sources, but it is also clear that a considerable portion is genuine Santal lore, and it is often difficult to distinguish between both elements. Thus the name Thakur of the vague supreme god seems to be Aryan; and such is certainly the case with his additional designation Jiu 'soul, spirit'. But that need not imply that the whole conception is Aryan. Several customs and institutions described in the text have admittedly been taken over from the Hindus, but also here there are numerous doubtful points, which only future research can clear up. 174 [776]

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

FOREWORD

Fifty years ago, in 1887, the late Rev. L. O. Skrefsrud published The Traditions and Institutions of the Santhals, Horkoren Mare Hapramko reak Katha, as a guide for the Santals, especially in the customary matters dealt with in the book, and also on account of its ethnological value. It was re-edited by me, in 1916 and 1929, only with a short preface and a few pages of fresh matter, added at the end, at the request of certain Santals. What here follows is a translation with a number of explanatory footnotes and some additional matter. As only a very few would be able to use the work in the original Santali, and as it is of considerable ethnological interest, I have repeatedly been asked to translate it. My translation is absolutely literal, in order to enable the reader, as far as possible, to understand the Santal mentality and way of expression. 128

With the exception of a short story of the Santal insurrection of 1855 the original work was taken down by Skrefsrud from the mouth of an old guru, named Kolean. According to a statement towards the end of the book the dictation was finished on the 15th of February, 1871. 115 128

Skrefsrud once told me, that he had hunted everywhere among the Santals to find a man who knew his people and their traditions and customs, and that Kolean without comparison was the best authority he had been able to find. Skrefsrud further told me, that the book contains absolutely nothing of his own, the whole being a faithful record of Kolean's words and language.

I cannot, however, help thinking that Skrefsrud had something to do with the arrangement. The language is easy and fine, and Kolean's narrative was based on oral tradition handed down verbatim by teacher to disciple, from generation to generation, a practice which, as Skrefsrud states in the Annual Report of the Mission for the year 1887—88, "has now fallen into disuse". 128 538

This does not exclude the possibility of our learning something from other sources, and some Santals have actually narrated things which Kolean did not mention. Sometimes we can see that such tales are adaptations of Hindu lore, as when some gurus maintain that their ancestors followed Rama to fight Ravona in Ceylon. In other cases, especially with regard to Santal customs and institutions, we may have to do with independent lines of tradition. 115 [177] [178] [538]

Kolean hailed, as he tells at the end, from a village called Pabea in a "country" (rural district) called Pandra in the district of Manbhum to the southwest of the Santal Parganas.

1 Oslo Ethn. Mus. — Redding.

2: Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

He stated that he was a disciple of a guru named Buku. Together with other Santals he had emigrated eastwards. His old home being in Manbhum explains that some very few of his statements are different from what is the present custom in the Santal Parganas. Kolean was a guru, a designation borrowed from the Hindus but adapted to suit Santal society. A Santal guru is a man who is supposed to know certain things, e. g., what should be recited at some ceremonial functions, and who is able to act as a reciter when called upon to do so. Any Santal can become a guru, by attaching himself to an older guru and gradually learning from him. In this way we cannot expect absolute uniformity throughout.

The use of such recitations may partly be due to imitation of Hindu customs, and there are definite statements in the traditional tales here translated to the effect that the ancestors on a certain occasion, after long deliberations, decided to abandon some customs of their own and to adopt Hindu usages instead. In this connexion it is of interest to note that the Santals often use songs in a foreign language, notably Bihari, during their festivals and at cremations. And it is a curious fact that many Santals do not understand these songs. It is evident that we have, to some extent, to do with borrowings, but it would be an exaggeration to maintain that the whole has been borrowed.

The traditional history of the world as contained in the first part of Kolean's narrative is recited twice in connexion with the life of every Santal, first at the caco chaṭiar, when a child is ceremoniously given full social right, and finally at the bhaṇḍau, the funeral ceremony, when the deceased is handed over to the next world and to the care of the departed ancestors.

P. O. Bodding.

e. To be possessed.

About being possessed I have already spoken: at the time when they make the bongas come up in the sacred grove, they cause men to be possessed, and at the Flower festival they become possessed of their own accord; but also at times of fever and illness they cause men to be possessed, in order to ask them and to be informed. When a bonga has inspired a man, he gets into a trance and is possessed, and the bonga speaks through his mouth. We ask the bongas at such time: Do please, my Lord, here filling the bed, overfilling the mat, we are lying, we are curled up, feeble, scantily clad, where it ran into seed and ripened, in what way it was half-done, was indifferently done, this one thing tell us, show us; where it started, had its origin, carefully using a split bamboo, a stretched out thread, make a way, make a road in connexion with this, Lord Father my Ṭhakur[7]. Then the possessed men tell that they are possessing bongas, saying: We have one day, half-a-day desired, have coveted, we have frightened, have alarmed, where should we lay the blame, the fault. Then they quickly make a sound that it is allright. The men then answer: Well then, now we have got to know, we have understood, we have had warning, have become conscious, please, at the Flower festival or at the Sohrae we shall give ye this portion; well then, this fever, this illness ye at once carry along, carry along in a sling, and medicine leaf-cups, large leaf-cups with medicine we shall apply, shall put on; may he get well, may he recover, that he may say from to-day: please give me rice, please give me food; may he eat, may he take food; have a care then, don't deceive us, let us see your trustworthiness. Then at this moment the bongas answer: Look then, so long a time, so long an age our (word) has not been false, not been falsified; for what purpose should we let it loose, set it free? like a stone, like a rock we have pressed it, we have pressed it down. Then when they have got confidence, the people say: Well, my Lords, it has become late and a long time, the horses, the umbrellas have become tired, please let it come to an end. Thereupon the possessed ones come to. 787

The ancestors have said that when those to be possessed are inspired, they become unconscious; they do not remember anything. But nowadays the possessed ones remember everything. Perhaps these also are like the deceitful witchfinders of the present day, probably they are. Also due to greediness they become possessed in the present age, that they may get excellent beer, under false pretences. One man[8] has told the following: When I get possessed, I remember everything, and I hear and follow clearly all their talk, and I have got for myself a good deal of excellent beer by false pretences. This man lives in Benagaria; all people know his name. He has told: If I do not get excellent beer at some festival, then I meditate in my mind how I shall get tasty beer. And I say: O, I shall 178 787

[7] No Santal has been able to tell the writer what the real meaning of the rigmarole is. [8] The man referred to was Biram, who later on became Skrefsrud's principal assistant in Santali. [115]

10 Cole Etc. Mus. — Bodding.

XIV. WHAT HAS BEEN ADDED BELOW IS BY SIDO DESMAṄJHI SARDAR OF AMBAJOṚA[1]

a. About adoption.

When a man marries a second wife[2], and this second wife has a son of her first husband brought with her, then if he wishes to give him full adoption, the man tells the village headman of this, that is, he informs him what they have both decided. The village headman then invites those who can claim this child, and they come to talk the matter over. In the presence of the village headman they consult together, whether they shall set the child free or not. If they set the child free, they say: Well, Father headman, we the claimants have before you and before the village people renounced all claims on this child. So from to-day he belongs to this stepfather of his. Consequently he has no right to his natural father's lands or cattle, money and so on; he will not get anything. 597

When this is said, they ask the stepfather for five four-anna bits, the provision of the sitting village council. Thereupon they salute each other and separate.

Now the stepfather fixes a day for adopting the child. Then on the day fixed he calls out for being shaved, as at the name-giving festival. They are shaved in the same way, and in the same way they drink Nim-gruel. And then the "midwife" informs the gathered men and women of the stepfather's sept. Thereupon they separate.

Now they give the child the Baha Sọhrae, i. e., the real original bonga's sacrificial meat and rice. From this time the child has become his own child. And this child will get an equal share with his stepfather's own sons of his agricultural lands, money, and cattle. But while the real sons have a right to the property of cousins when they die out, he has in the same way no right to their property; only to the property of his stepfather he has a full right. 597 428

b. About adopted children.

Now and then they adopt orphan children and support them. And when they grow into maturity, these also get an equal share to those of the proper children in the agricultural lands, money, and cattle. If such a boy dies and falls away, and there is any property of

[1] What here follows was added at the request of many Santals. Sido was the man best qualified to do this. He had for many years as dạs mạñjhi had to do with these matters; he had also been an honorary magistrate. [115]
[2] Naturally a widow.

B Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1938-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

115 teacher, Rairangpur. Mr. Niranjan Manjhi of Baripada
128 helped me in the translation and transliteration of Santal folk-songs. The late Mr Jadabendra Manjhi of the
[122] State Secretariat, Baripada, deputed by the state to help me in my studies, narrated to me many of the folk-tales incorporated in the book. It is sad to remember that he could
115 not see the work in print. Educated Santals of Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj, Messrs. Sanra Charan Manjhi, Sundar Mohan Manjhi, and Sunaram Soren threw much light on their manners and customs. Hosts of other names including those of Messrs. Ananta Manjhi, Routrai Manjhi Matu Manjhi and Surendra Manjhi of Baripada crowd round my memory and to those unnamed, I offer my cordial thanks.

122 It is difficult to complete the list of my helpers without a
114 further reference to the Mayurbhanj State. The present Dewan Major B. P. Pande and his Secretary, Mr. Rajagopalam gave me facilities of Santal studies during my last trip to Mayur-
[128] bhanj. The blocks of some of the illustrations were lent by the state and the hospitality of Mayurbhanj made my several visits there comfortable and worthwhile.

128 In conclusion, I would sincerely thank Sj. Nibaran Chandra Ghatak, teacher, Chinsura, my students Sms. Sisir Kumar De, B.Sc., Bipadbhanjan Sen, Purna Chandra Chatterjea, Tara Prasad Mukherji and Subodh Chandra Ganguly in connexion with the preparation of the Mss. together with the Index.

Charulal Mukherjea
Dumka, Santal Parganas.

N. B. Slightly abridged.
C.M.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

614
563
829

mation of the Santals, as distinct from other sub-clans as "Kuda-Hansdak," "Bale Hansdak" who are considered pure. It is said that the *Gòndwars*, in their attempt to conceal their real identity declare themselves as belonging to the *Sòrèn* clan, whereas, in their manner of worship they differ from the Sòrèns radically, thereby giving a clue to their identity.

614
194

The derivation of the very word *Gòndwar* points to their connexion with the Gònds. The ending "war" probably means "relating to." In saying so, we rely on the fact that one of the sub-clans of the *Murmus* call themselves *Khedwar-Murmu*. According to them they derived the name from the circumstance that their progenitors chased and hunted a "Murum" (*Nil gae* ; *Portax Pictu*). *Khedwar* here means those related to a chase (*khed* = chase, *war* = relating to).[1]

Clan Exogamy and Totemism

614
192

At this stage we should note that all these clans are exogamous ; and presumably to preserve the blood from being contaminated by unconscious incest, they have certain pass-words to distinguish

---

1. Regarding Bedeas, Kharwars and Gòndwars, we must acknowledge the help received from Moulavi M. Laeequddin, Census Officer, Mayurbhanj.

[115]

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

Jòm Sim.

796
[782]

This is a festival in which offerings of sheep or goats are made to the Sun-god, *Siñ Boñga*. No definite time is fixed for the celebration of this sacrifice ; it may do if one performs it once in one's life-time, everything depending on the length of one's purse. Those who can afford it, generally perform the worship after every fifth year. It is not a public worship like the Flower-festival or the Harvest Home, as the village deities supposed to reside in the Holy Grove are not worshipped, nor do the Santals as a tribe join it. It is a worship restricted to a particular clan in groups. So when the *Màrṇḍis* perform *Jòm Sim puja*, it is they and they alone who take part in it and invitations issued to other clans can only include the daughters of *Màrṇḍis*, married in other clans and their children. The funds, of course, are subscribed by the members of the clan.

796
614

[115]

Jadabendra Mañjhi (a *Màrṇḍi*), an educated Santal of Mayurbhanj, working in the Secretariat there, thus gave us a description of the festival, soon after it was celebrated by his clan. He said that the *Màrṇḍis* according to custom perform this festival before the full-moon of *Falgun* (Feb.-March) or *Baisakh* (April-May) and not at any other time, a date being fixed by the clan in a meeting, and a goat castrated as a preparation for the festival.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

Hill Spirits

Apart from the village-spirits mentioned before, the Santals people their hills with numerous superhuman agencies, called *Pats*. These powers inspire them with a fear and naturally, they are propitiated so that they may not do the Santals any harm. 776 [782]

The enquirer into *pat* spirits comes across a host of names dotting the whole country-side, all deriving their names from the hills, big or small, they are supposed to reside in.

Rup Narain Mañjhi (Baske) of Pokhuridiha, Mayurbhanj, stated that the Santals in his locality worship the following hill-spirits:— [115]

1. Berha Pat—He is the chief hill-spirit. He is worshipped for success in hunting and for protecting the Santals from harms incidental thereto; and secondly, for protecting people when undertaking any journey. The deity delights in receiving red fowls and uncastrated he-goats as sacrificial offerings. 776 782

2. Mangar Pat—This deity is worshipped for reasons similar to those stated before. There were times when this god received human sacrifices.

3. Budha Pahar—A male deity. He is worshipped for help towards successful journeys. He receives a cock of any colour and an uncastrated goat for propitiation.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
BANURBHANJ

776
782 4. Pauri Pat – A female deity. She is invoked for success in journeys. Previously human sacrifices were offered to her, but now she receives fowls and uncastrated goats as offerings.

[115] Surendra Mañjhi of village Chandua, Mayurbhanj, stated that in their locality, they have the following *Pat* spirits: —

1. Chandra Pat—Worshipped if there is no rain, with offerings of sweets, bananas, hens of any colour and uncastrated goats.

2. Duarsani Pat – Same as before.

He added that all these Pat spirits are also called *Thakran* in Mayurbhanj.

Amongst other *Pats*, lying distributed throughout Mayurbhanj, mention was made of "*Dagarsila*" who is invoked during warfare. He is propitiated by a red cock and an uncastrated goat. Mention should also be made of *Sula Pat*, whose aid is sought during litigation, epidemics amongst men or cattle or during droughts. This deity has no special liking of any colour of the fowls or goats to be sacrificed in his honour. Next comes *Buru Bonga*, the horrible deity who delights in human blood. Although human sacrifice is now a rare phenomenon even to be stealthily indulged in, blood-curdling traditions linger of human victims being decoyed and sacrificed by the Santals out to wreak private

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1932
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

Different Grades of Witches[1]

754 554 Whatever the traditions behind Witch-craft may be, the present-day Santal in Mayurbhanj believes that there are mainly two classes of witches, viz. *Ḍàn* and *Nañjòm*. The *Nañjòm* are the higher class amongst *Ḍàns*. When a *Nañjòm* becomes very expert and has all the *Ḍàn Boṅgas* under her control, she is then called a *Nañjòm*. She then walks with her hands, and her legs are stretched upwards. Her [756] witchery is said to be very powerful and it is said, no ordinary *Ojha* (witch-doctor) can overcome her. The *Ḍáns* generally come out at night and take with them tigers which they call dogs (*Bhàtu*). Along with the so-called dogs, they roam about in troops in a naked condition. They worship their witch-gods and practise *mantras* (charms) learnt from their *gurus* (teachers). By exercising the charm of these *mantras*, secretly and repeatedly amongst human beings and domestic animals, they cause illness and sometimes bring death to them.

754 ### *Is Witch-Craft Inborn?*

The Santals say that the power of Witch-craft is not inborn but always acquired by training. The

---

[115] 1 The materials of this and the following sub-section were supplied by Messrs. Ananta Mañjhi and Samra Ch. Mañjhi of Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj.

31 Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

personalities of even mothers, wives, sisters and daughters; so the witch-doctor flourishes to relieve the society of its canker. The witch-doctor finds out the evil deities (*Boṅgas*) who create disturbance in the village. They trace witches among men and women. It is he only who can say if the household deity (*Oṛak' Boṅga*) or *Iahèr era* (a female deity of the Holy Grove) is angry with anybody and needs propitiation.

In course of our enquiries in Mayurbhanj rural areas, Mr. Ananta Mañjhi, a Sub-Inspector of Police of Kaptipada described to us in detail the *modus operandi* of witch-doctors.

He said that whenever a man comes to a witch-doctor to complain of some disturbance in his household, the *Ojha* at first performs some worship by keeping a water-pot, *Tursi* leaves and a piece of copper in his presence. Then he takes a cane stick, smells it together with the aforesaid articles, and throws some rice in the water-pot. Thereafter, in a trance he begins to mention the names of the father, number of children, numbers of huts and doors to locate the evil. When all these are answered in the affirmative, the evil deity who created the disturbance is named; and the offerings suitable for its propitiation are mentioned. And if it be that a witch is responsible for the trouble, the person under whose cover she

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

755 756 [754] passes in the society is mentioned. To discover witches and *Boŋgas* some witch-doctors use *sal*-leaves moistened with oil and vermilion, some ring a bell, while others merely blow a conch-shell. He also gave us an account of an *Ojha* he had seen, who could, without performing any ritual, exactly say everything in detail by sitting glum after a period of moody meditation. After this, he would give elaborate instructions as to how to remove the evil spirit.

754 [115] "Witches flit about with a light like the willo' the wisp," said Mr. Sundar Mohan Mañjhi, a college student of Bamanghati, Mayurbhanj. He said, "On a new moon night my brother went to a tank alone with a torch-light with him. There he met a co-villager, and to their surprise, both of them noticed one or two lights moving away. Soon after all was dark, the lights had vanished. They tried to focus the torch-light on the place where the light was last seen. But to their horror the lights appeared again and began to run towards them. On the previous day my brother had got an itching sensation on his finger. But after the aforesaid incident, a boil appeared giving unusually excruciating pain, and his palm began to swell. The pain was incessant: all sorts of medical aid were tried but to no effect. Then, after a day he disclosed the matter and the connected incident to the people.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

Next an *Ojha* (a weaver by caste) was called in and consulted at his home, the patient giving no hints of the previous history. To their surprise, the *Ojha* himself detailed the incident, diagnosing the disease to be due to the evil eye of a witch. Naturally, the *Ojha* was requested to remove the same. The *Ojha* was supplied with vermilion, sun-dried rice, some grass (*Kaṭkòm carèc'*. A common grass, Rottboellia perforata, *Roxb.*) and two chickens. Then with some charcoal and brick powder he drew some figures on the floor and began to chant incantations to deities with appropriate offerings. Next, he took the materials to a distant place and made similar figures there also. He invited his gods and goddesses, offered them vermilion, rice, a piece of copper and a wick soaked in *ghee*. He then began to run hither and thither after marking himself with vermilion on his forehead, arms, breast and thighs. He ran thorns on some parts of his body, and offered a few drops of blood to his deity. It was found that after the removal of the witch responsible by the witch-doctor, the patient felt relieved, and from the following day the swelling subsided. Then, after a very simple treatment, the boil was healed.

Questioned about *Ojhas*, Fagu Mañjhi, Desh prodhan of Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj, said: "People go to *Jan-ojhas* if there is any disease in the family either contagious or of a serious nature.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

uncanny part of the whole problem is that they assume human shapes, and thus like to enter into marital union with Santals of the opposite sexes. But the most

A perusal of the stories relating to *Boṅgas* reveals that in their houses the *Boṅgas* have strange coiled up seats as hoods of serpents (*Boṅga gando*, in Mayurbhanj Santali), near which, fearful tigers* and leopards crouch, spreading consternation to the human beings kidnapped. They eat like men, but when their dinner is brought into this earth of ours, lo and behold! it will change into leaves and cow-dung, in the twinkling of an eye. Unions between human beings and *Boṅgas* have their temporal advantages, and we see how during the pendency of a liaison between a Santal and a *Boṅga*-girl, all his affairs prospered beyond expectation.

The *modus operandi* of *Boṅga*-lovers in forming such unions is seen in the story of how a *Boṅga*-girl,

* On this point Mr. Samra Mañjhi of Bantali, Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj stated as follows:—

Some Boṅgas have their serpents, tigers, deer and bears as their workers. The serpents are their seats, the tigers are their dogs, the deer are their oxen and the bears are their servants. The beasts do not always remain in the Boṅgas' house. They roam about the jungles, but they remain under their master's control. Whenever the Boṅga calls on them, they are present, ready to carry out his orders. In Santali, the serpents are called *Boṅga gando*, the tigers are *gutrut sata*, the deer *Kada* and *dari* and the bears are *Kanmi*.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

women reply in chorus. So they go on till about 3 a. m. in the morning.

It must be added, however, that "Lagren" is a very stimulating dance, and on these occasions the youths and maids of the tribe get plenty of opportunities for love-making. Even the steps of the dance provide facilities for courtship, as the couples face side-ways and talk as they dance. And after the dances, parties in love retire into the woods.

The songs, sung on these occasions, are mostly love-songs. An illustration is given here:—

Nadiaka dhare dhare
Kahar bansi baje,
Hai hai òntare kandiche.
Akhite dekhini, kanetò sunini,
Hai hai, amar òntare kandiche.

(Translation)

On the banks of the river,
Whose lute plays?
Alas! the heart weeps.
I haven't seen with eyes,
Nor heard with ears.
Alas, my heart weeps!

Nabin Mañjhi, Headman of Muruda, Mayurbhanj, said that when there are no rains, there are certain "Lagren" songs in invocation to the Rain-

4: Biswas · D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

of the Kisku sept. Santals are very particular about the honour of their women so far at least as outsiders are concerned and it is quite in keeping with their ideas that a sept formed by liaison with a Diku (non-Santal) should have been looked down upon and eventually banished from the community. 614 539

The names of the sub-septs have been collected from my Santal informant Ram Marandi (Parganait of Sundar Pahari of Godda sub-division). It agrees substantially in detail when I checked up the data from Campbell's Dictionary published in 1899. The sincerity of my informant is to be judged from his not being able to mention any sub-sept Chonrey and Pauria which do not occur in that area. The general impression which I gathered from other Santal dignitaries is that the sub-septs did not generally exist. The sub-septs appear at least in this case not to be exagamous units at all; they rather mark family distinction and traditions, for instance those who would not paint vermilion would be called Sada (white) or those who may have been descended from a headman or a priest would be called Majhikhil or Naikekhil. The sub-septs thus marked an important tendency of the Santal exogamous group either to be divided into sub-groups or sometimes to add a sub-group to itself. This alone explains the disparity in number of the sub-septs in the various septs. There is of course a tendency of the sub-septs to approximate to the number twelve according to the pattern of the total number of the septs. But this is by no means the case. Apparently the one important function of the sub-sept is to distinguish between Nij and Sada which occurs in all the septs. This pertains 614 [115] [114] [302] [184] [302]

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

PREFACE

THIS study represents an attempt to provide the kind of book that I wish could have been placed in my hands when I first began to work among the Santals. It is based very largely on material gathered during my residence in the village of Sarenga, District Bankura, between October 1932 and April 1943. Much of what is said is true of the Santals wherever they are found. The uniformity of Santal culture over a wide area raises questions of great interest to students, but no attempt has been made to deal with them here. Nor have I attempted to deal with the wider questions involved in the problem of the Christian approach to peoples living in small-scale societies, though I hope that I may have been able to supply some data relevant to the discussion. We missionaries are at times impatient of the strictures of anthropologists, but we would do well to heed the warning of such a missionary as Dr. Kraemer when he says: "Missions make the claim, on account of their religious aim, that Christianity contains the forces of moral and spiritual regeneration so sorely needed in this time of disintegration. It is encouraging to read twice, for instance, in Monica Hunter's *Reaction to Conquest* that Christianity proves able to supply a new invigorating moral basis of life. Yet missions ought always to be mindful that this does not result *mechanically* from the acceptance of Christianity, but that to achieve it there is need for a constant application to the task of religious, moral, cultural and social education—and this must be inspired by the desire *to serve the true interests of the people.*"[1]

I count it among the more fortunate circumstances of my life that my first five years were spent at Pakur in the Santal Parganas; the investigations then begun perhaps helped to shape my outlook! During the years at Sarenga I came to owe a great debt to many individual Santals. Three men in particular helped by placing their knowledge at my disposal, and most of the statements in this book have been checked more than once in the course of many conversations with them. The late Ernest Soren was for many years headmaster of the Boys' School at Sarenga; he became a Christian in early manhood and was held in high regard by all who knew him, yet he never

[1] H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a non-Christian World*, London, 1938, p. 436. The italics are the author's.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

forgot that he was a Santal. Another Christian who helped me was Babulal Hembrom of Barikul; a villager all his life, at my suggestion he kept a diary of life in Barikul for one year, and I have drawn freely on the material thus provided. The third name I wish to mention is that of the late Binu Hāsdāk', a *parganath* who lived in the village of Tantidanga. For some years he called to see me each week on his way to market; he used to accept a sum of two annas each time he came, not as a dole, but as the equivalent of the hospitality to which he was entitled as a visitor to my home. From him I learnt much about the ideas and customs that ruled his life, as they had done the lives of his ancestors.

A great deal has been written about the Santals, but most of the literature is difficult to find even when you know where to look for it. The bibliography contains a list of the works I have consulted, and acknowledgments have been made in footnotes. It needs to be said, however, that all subsequent workers must remain heavily indebted to that great Norwegian scholar and missionary, the late P. O. Bodding, particularly for his monumental *Santali Dictionary*, which is a veritable encyclopaedia of Santal life.

I wish to thank the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal for permission to use material previously published in two papers in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, entitled "Some Notes on Bongaism" (Vol. V, 1939, No. 3) and "Some Beliefs and Customs relating to Birth among the Santals" (Vol. VII, 1941, No. 1). I owe much to the Rev. Edwin Smith, D.D., pre-eminent among missionary anthropologists, who spent Christmas at Sarenga in 1938, and has encouraged me since that time. I am deeply grateful to the Rev. Charles P. Groves, Professor of Missions at the Selly Oak Colleges, who has read the manuscript and saved me from numerous pitfalls, and to my friend the Rev. Wilfred H. Russell, who drew the map, as well as the illustrations on pages 24 and 49. I wish also to thank the Rev. Alec R. Spooner for preparing the Index. My wife has helped with many candid criticisms, constructive suggestions, and, above all, by her comradeship during the years at Sarenga.

W. J. CULSHAW.

BANKURA,
January, 1949.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

the attention of Sir James Frazer, who quoted the account written by the Rev. A. Campbell in *The Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* (1916). Frazer found in the story confirmation of his thesis: "This Santal story of the origin of man combines the principles of creation and evolution, for according to it mankind is ultimately derived from two images, which were modelled in human form out of froth or damp clay, but were afterwards accidentally transformed into birds, from whose eggs the first man and woman of flesh and blood were hatched."[1]

The following account, written down in the Sarenga area by an old man who could not have had access to any of the previously published versions, brings out most of the essential features of the story.[2] He wrote:

"The sea was always there. *Thakur* said in the beginning: 'How shall we improve it?' Then *Thakur* called to himself many of the kings of the sea and asked them how it was possible for earth to be raised from the sea bottom, but not one of them was able to do it. So *Thakur* first of all called Crab and said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Crab replied: 'Yes, I can.' Then he set about carrying it up from the bottom of the sea, but it dissolved and he could do nothing. After him, *Thakur* called Tortoise. When he came *Thakur* said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Then Tortoise replied, 'I shall raise it', but he also did not succeed. Last of all *Thakur* called Worm. When he came *Thakur* said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Then Worm said: 'Yes, I can raise it; but you call Tortoise here and place a golden plate on his back. I will eat the mud on the bottom of the sea, and then excrete it at the other end on to the golden plate on Tortoise's back. In this way I shall raise the earth from the bottom of the sea.' And so indeed it was done. But the earth that had been raised was very uneven, and *Thakur* harrowed it to make it level. During the harrowing the sea came up where there were hollows, and where there were high places these became mountains and hills.

Then *Thakur* said: 'The world is made after a fashion, but how shall we improve it?' Then *Thakur* made two birds out of *sirom* grass seeds. They were called *Hãs* and *Hãsil*, goose and

[1] J. G. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, Macmillan, 1918, Vol. I, p. 22.
[2] Durlob Murmu of Govindapur.

8: Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

614 one of the original twelve *khût*. They are not allowed to have
614 spots made on them and they will not be vaccinated, but they
784 may be cicatrized; however, their daughters and sisters are not
[304] allowed to be tattooed until after they are married. The un-
[291] married men are not allowed to wear any garment made from
[342] jute. They must not plaster their houses with any other than
[531] white earth; and they may not draw any pictures on the walls
[532] except plantain trees and date palms or figures that look like
782 pictures of temples, drawn with three fingers only. They make
614 their sacrifice at the time of the *Sohrae*; this is performed in the
house, and they sacrifice a pig. One year it must be a male un-
castrated pig and the next year a female, and if for any reason
they cannot get hold of a pig they may sacrifice a black hen.
[825] They should sacrifice to their sub-clan spirit in the shelter of a
[178] white ant hill;[1] but in these days they bring some earth from the
ant hill into the house and sacrifice there."

614 In a Sarenga schoolboy's essay on the origin of his own clan,
773 he began by relating the creation of mankind and finally con-
•[015] tinued: "All the Sorens were the soldiers of the Kisku, who were
the owners of the village at Campa Gar. The Marndi lived at
Cirunala, and between the two villages there flowed the Sitanala
river. They began to quarrel with each other because the people
of the two villages had to use the same river for bathing and for
drinking water. Now, since the Soren were the soldiers of the
Kisku, they are like the Gurkhas of Nepal. Just as the Gurkhas
are fierce and do not fear death, so too the Soren." So is virtue
614 inculcated by fostering pride in the clan. One of the sub-clans
[192] of the Soren is the Poita Soren. *Poita* is the word—as pro-
nounced by the Santals—for the sacred thread of the Brahmin.
[173] They relate that in the very early days the ancestors of the
Soren were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and some of the
company began to prepare the food and cook it. In imitation of
Brahmin cooks they put on sacred threads and served all the
people. From that time they became known as Poita Soren.
[782] When they sacrifice to their sub-clan spirit they sacrifice to him
alone, and the offering has to consist of a male uncastrated pig.
The rite is performed at sunrise. They may eat the flesh at any
time during that day and the following night, and if they are
unable to finish it they must bury it before the following sunrise

[171] [1] For references to the sanctity of white ant hills see *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, by W. Crooke, C.I.E., p. 380. The belief is widespread in India. "From early times the earth from an ant hill has been regarded as specially pure, representing 'the savour of the earth', and it was, and is, used in building altars."

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

His feet are washed in each house and he receives presents of grain and beer. The subsequent merrymaking dies down during the night. The celebration is completed on the following day, when the co-priest offers drops of his own blood to the boundary spirits.

The following account of the Spring festival held in Barikul in 1939 was recorded by Babulal at the time, and it conveys, as no outside account could, the atmosphere of the festival. He begins:

"*March* 17. Today is the bathing day for the Flower festival. Early in the morning the bailiff called everyone to make the booths ready in the sacred grove. The women were busy boiling their clothes. One young man from every house took part in the thatching of the booths; some brought *sarjom* branches from the jungle, and others made small wooden seats for the spirits. The priest washed all the things for the spirits' house—the bangles, the necklace, a bow and arrow, an axe, also basket, broom; bells and horns—and he brought back to his house an earthen pot of water for luck. The place of sacrifice was smeared with cowdung, and oil and vermilion were placed there in readiness. When the young men had finished the thatching they bathed, and then said to the bailiff: 'We go now to Sonadungri for the flower hunt; see that the drums beat and the horns sound at the foot of the banyan tree, for when we hear them we shall start. Do not delay, for we want to begin.' The bailiff completed his bath quickly, and taking four youths with the drums and the horns to the banyan tree by the stone fence he did as he had been requested. And so the youths went out hunting. They caught fourteen hares, thirteen jungle fowl, four partridges and ten squirrels. These they brought home hanging from a pole which was slung from the shoulders of two men. When they arrived back at the side of the large tank, the spoils were divided, and some we gave to the men of neighbouring villages who had joined in the hunt. The flesh was roasted and divided; some was given to the killers, some to the dogs, some to the villagers, and a special portion to the widows.

In the evening the bailiff called everyone to gather for the 'spirit possession'. We took three new winnowing fans and all collected at the priest's house. Three men were possessed, and each of them took hold of a winnowing fan. They were seated facing the east, and the priest put sun-dried rice on to the winnowing fan of *Marañ Buru*. Immediately to his left sat *Mañjhi*

[i.e. the priest.-Ed/pt]

Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

796 539 (115) Having given his account of the festival, Babulal then proceeds with the following account of the myth which carries back the origin of the observance to the period of the wanderings:

"It is said that at one time our ancestors were moving from one place to another for fear of Mirja Turuk.[1] During that period they lost their 'religion'.[2] When it was realized, one man from each of the twelve clans went out in search of it. Now the names of those who went out on this quest, taking with them an uncastrated goat, a *Lifa*[3] pig and some rice in a basket, were as follows: Ap'ñambondak', Hutumñambañjak', Narkakin ceḍe—these were two—Ote and Bole, and some others. They assembled in the Somoe valley in the forest of Siñ, and there they remained for twelve years. The feathery grass of that place all died, but none of them wished to go on farther to look for their 'religion'. All of them held back; they said one to another: 'You go first.' In the end, Ote and Bole said in desperation: 'All right, we shall lead the way.' Going farther, they entered the Man forest. The other ten followed them, but when they came into the forest they could not find Ote and Bole. They searched the whole forest through without success. Some of them at length found some footprints, whereupon they sang this song:

Look here, look at this,
The footprints of the *nilgae*;
Look here, look at this,
The footprints of the wild buffalo.

In what forest have they entered,
The footprints of the *nilgae*?
To what forest do they lead,
The footprints of the wild buffalo?

Into the forest of Man have they entered,
The footprints of the *nilgae*;
To the forest of Siñ have they led,
The footprints of the wild buffalo.[4]

[1] The now mythical Moslem ruler, mentioned also in Chapter 2, p. 24.
[2] An abbreviated account of this myth is given in Chapter 6, p. 66, where the word translated by "religion" is translated as "the right way to live".
[3] The meaning of this is not clear. *Lifa* is the proper name of *Maraṅ Buru* (see Chapter 7, p. 81).
[4] See Appendix B, No. 19.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

At sunset the unmarried men of the village bathe and then go to the nearby forest, from which they cut and bring back two branches of the *karam* tree. These branches, known as "virgin" *karam*, are set upright in two holes dug for the purpose. A piece of cloth is placed over the branches and a small light is lit in front of them. After the preliminary dancing one of the village elders recites the myth of the *Karam*, beginning from the creation myth; the story of the origin of the world is ordinarily referred to as the *Karam binti*. The recital is followed by another dance, which lasts through the night and is changed at cockcrow. The celebration continues till sunrise, when the branches are taken down to the water near the village by the same young men who brought them from the forest on the evening before. The youths immerse themselves, and the branches are floated away in a manner similar to that employed in floating away the bones of the dead.

The myth relates the story of the *Karam* to their own tribal history, and, as one finds in all Santal myths, memories of early wanderings are prominent. The following version was related by Durlob Murmu,[1] and it forms a continuation to the creation story:

"The name of Pilcu Haṛam and Pilcu Budhi's eldest son was Karmu Senor Sin. The eldest daughter was Hisi. They had two sons, who were called Karmu and Dharmu. Now Karmu was of the Hāsdāk' clan, and their maternal uncles were the Kisku *rajas* and the Marndi rich men. The Kisku lived at Campagor and the Marndi lived at Cirulagor,[2] and between the two villages flowed the Sitanala river. The people from both villages used to go to the river for their bathing and drinking water. There was a quarrel between them over a bride, and while the fight was on the Kisku killed the father of Karmu and Dharmu. After this they fell into great want. One day they went out to beg and were on the way to Campanagar. They came to the banks of a river, and Dharmu lay down at the foot of a *karam* tree and fell asleep. The name of the river was Tatijhari –it was the place where *Maraṅ Buru* had first woven cloth garments. Below that place he had made a small embankment, and that place was called the Saḍoyar valley; just below it he had bathed, and so the place was known as Bathing river. That river had sprung from the Lope mountain hard by the Bell banyan tree, and its waters flowed towards the sunrise.

[1] See Chapter 6, p. 65, footnote 2. [2] Cf. reference in Chapter 6, p. 74.